

Linus Pauling Feels Vitamins May Be Mental Illness Cure

By Dustin Harvey

STANFORD (UPI) — Chemist Linus Pauling, the only man to win two Nobel Prizes, is hard at work at the age of 69 researching the possibility that vitamins can help cure mental illness.

Pauling, who won the 1954 Nobel Prize in chemistry for his work on the structure of the protein molecule and the 1962 Nobel Peace Prize for championing the atomic test-ban treaty, has studied the molecular basis of mental illness for the past 15 years.

The use of massive doses of vitamins — primarily vitamin B3, which also is known as niacin or nicotinic acid — in the treatment of schizophrenia was started 18 years ago in Canada.

The technique generally is called "megavitamin" therapy, although Pauling has coined his own label of "orthomolecular psychiatry." It usually is used along with other treatments for the mentally ill.

A small but enthusiastic group of doctors, mostly psychiatrists, uses the vitamin treatment, but the vast bulk of the psychiatric profession remains skeptical. Clinical studies are being made by several researchers in an effort to determine the technique's real value.

Pauling supported the theory in a scientific paper published two years ago. He contended most mental illness is genetic in nature and may result from low concentrations of vitamins and other chemicals in the brain.

"I believe that mental disease is for the most part caused by abnormal (chemi-

cal) reaction rates, as determined by genetic constitution and diet, and by abnormal molecular concentrations of essential substances," he said.

"Significant improvements in the mental health of many persons might be achieved by the provision of the optimum molecular concentrations of substances normally present in the human body."

Pauling said his recent research has been a continuance of studies on the biochemistry of vitamins and on the vitamin needs of schizophrenics, particularly their need for vitamin C, or ascorbic acid.

He and his colleagues, working on a \$72,000 annual grant from the National Institutes of Mental Health, are analyzing massive doses given 100 schizophrenics and 100 "controls" — normal people.

Pauling said the researchers were making "good, steady progress" and their study indicated schizophrenics had depleted levels of ascorbic acid compared to the control population.

"It may be that people who have the gene for schizophrenia would get along all right on ordinary circumstances," he theorized, "but if they're also a little abnormal in some other gene that involves one or another of these vitamins, then this extra abnormality may increase the penetrance of the gene for schizophrenia so that they easily become mentally ill."

"If one could control this vitamin abnormality, which might require large intakes

of vitamins, the manifestations of the mental illness might never show themselves."

Pauling said vitamin treatment is preferable to other methods because it involves use of natural substances already in the body.

"We know they are non-toxic," he said. "Why not try them and see if the patients get along better?"

Pauling has become so enthusiastic about vitamins that for the past four years he has been taking large quantities of vitamin C, "which I think improves the general health of almost anybody, helping protect against colds and generally giving them more energy."

"I have asked the question: Would the person who is taking twice the recommended amount of vitamin C — which is 40 to 60 milligrams a day — be in any better health? My answer is yes, I think that he would."

"I myself take 3,000 milligrams a day. I haven't had any serious colds since I started, where I was always catching them before. Of course, this is not evidence. But a lot of people have said the same thing."

Pauling has not completely dropped the vigorous antiwar activities which won him his second Nobel Prize.

He has been active in the anti-Vietnam war movement on the Stanford campus.